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ADDRESS ✓

OF

DR. SAMUEL BARD,

SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION,

BEFORE THE

General Assembly of Louisiana.

DELIVERED ON THE 20TH FEBRUARY, 1856

BATON ROUGE:

ADVOCATE STEAM POWER PRESS PRINT.

1856.

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JOINT RESOLUTION.

Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened, That Dr. SAMUEL BARD, Superintendent of Public Education, be requested, at his earliest convenience, to deliver an Address on Education in the Hall of the House of Representatives.—Adopted in the House Feb. 14th, and in the Senate Feb. 16th, 1856.

RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE.

Resolved, by the Senate of the State of Louisiana, That one thousand copies of the Address of Dr. SAMUEL BARD, on Education, delivered in the Hall of the House of Representatives on the 20th ultimo, be printed for the use of the Senate.—Adopted March 11th, 1856.

OFFICE OF STATE SUPERINTENDENT,
March 12th, 1856.

Hon. C. H. MOUTON, *President of the Senate* :

Enclosed is a copy of my Address, as reported by Col. H. A. KIDD, which is submitted in accordance with the resolution of the Senate of the 11th instant.

Respectfully,

SAMUEL BARD.



A D D R E S S .

Dr. BARD, on being presented to a large and discriminating audience, assembled in the Hall of the House of Representatives, on the evening of the 20th of February, said :

That, in conformity with a joint resolution of the General Assembly, he appeared before them to address them on topics of vital importance touching the educational interests of the State at large.

It was not necessary, said he, in this age of enterprise and improvement, that he should argue the vast importance of a practical education for the masses. The inestimable advantages arising from a thorough system of public education would, doubtless, be admitted by all.

In many of our sister States, said he, the cause was far in advance of us, for reasons that were legion. In the first place, they have taken hold of the subject with an energy and resoluteness of the most marked character. In the next place, we, of Louisiana, have shown a want of confidence in our ability and resources to build up and render efficient our own institutions of learning.

You, said he, have sent your sons and daughters North to be educated, thereby acknowledging the entire inability of the South for the accomplishment of so important a desideratum. Was such a procedure just to the South and her peculiar institutions? Nay, said he. Was it just to your children? In sending them North you subject them to a process of acclimation decidedly detrimental to

their developing constitutions—a fact which no skillful or experienced physician will, for a moment, question.

If you desire your children to reside in the South, is it not right that you should educate them on Southern soil, and under the influence of Southern institutions? If you wish the South to enjoy that exalted respect to which she is justly entitled, depend upon your own resources and exertions. But here, the speaker said, he was met with the objection, we have not teachers, nor the peculiar facilities possessed at the North. Why have we them not? The reasons are as glaring as the noonday's sun. Now, said he, with emphasis, the South has one of two things to do—to educate her sons and daughters, or to lose ground from year to year in influence and political power. *Would that our people could appreciate the vast necessity of cherishing home institutions in preference to those of a foreign soil!*

What has been done for the cause of education in our own State? Something has been accomplished by private enterprise, worthy of commendation. The State, herself, has not been parsimonious in her donations to colleges and private institutions, from the administration of Gov. CLAIBORNE, down to the present time. But her aid has been given to little purpose. Why this want of success? Why has so little been accomplished? Simply for the want of confidence on the part of parents in our ability to sustain institutions of learning in our midst. This is the prime cause of the failure we so much deplore. He had heard gentlemen, in explanation of the reasons which influenced them in sending their sons North to be educated, say, with apparent exultation, that we have no institutions in the South deserving patronage. They should have blushed in giving utterance to such an expression; but, alas! no blush was visible. *He* would not acknowledge the inferiority of our institutions, even if it were true. *He* could not glory in his own shame.

But it is not true that we are wholly wanting institutions possessing the merit of growing excellence. Louisiana, said the speaker, with an air of triumph, is not entirely destitute of colleges; of her halls of literature and science. We have "Centenary College,"

numbering upwards of two hundred pupils, and possessing, he was informed, a chemical, philosophical, and astronomical apparatus, equal, if not superior, to that of many institutions North. There was, also, the promising college at Mount Lebanon, in the Parish of Bienville, whose President was pronounced by THOMAS JEFFERSON, in a private letter, to be one of the ripest scholars that adorned the soil of Virginia. There were, also, institutions of learning at Homer and Minden, in the Parish of Claiborne, of which much might be said in commendation. And here, said the speaker, at the capital of the State, we have several institutions which should gratify the pride of all who take an interest in the advancement of the cause of education in our State.

The speaker next introduced the subject of Common Schools. He remarked that more than two millions of dollars had been appropriated by the State in behalf of the system since its organization. Several laws had been enacted, which, making no adequate provision for their enforcement, had failed, in a great measure, to attain the objects hoped for by the friends of the system. These facts are not "hid under a bushel;" they were too glaring for concealment. Within the past year, in thirty parishes, 12,228 children attended school, and 11,191 did not attend. In these parishes there was paid out to teachers \$114,308 34. The yearly apportionment, for the same parishes, was \$142,681 28. The schools numbered 498. He alluded to those thirty parishes only for the purpose of illustration, to exhibit the present operations of the system.

From these figures, said the speaker, it is obvious that there is a lamentable deficiency in the system; for it appears from them that nearly one half of the educable children in these parishes had not, for that year, derived any advantage from the system. This being the case, he asked, what should be done? Truly, the question was a grave one, and more easily asked than answered. But, notwithstanding, he would propose an answer.

First: give us a practical, common-sense law, plain in its provisions, positive in its requirements; such a law as a distinguished

member of the House of Representatives, who is also connected with the Press, has said could be drawn up by three business men in a very short space of time.

Second, said the speaker, let the State Superintendent be placed by the General Assembly in a position that will enable him to render efficient service, as the head of the system, in promoting the educational interests of the people. Let him have work to do ; let his energies be awakened ; let him not be entrained by the provisos of faulty and inefficient laws ; let him have before him the certain prospect of accomplishing something—possibly much—as the result of his labors in the cause of education.

The speaker then proceeded to the consideration of a system of Normal Schools. That our efforts in behalf of education may succeed to the fullest extent, he said that we must make provision for the education of our teachers. We should select for that work *home material*—persons who have been reared on Southern soil, who were imbued with Southern sentiments and attachments, who feel a deep concern for the weal and prosperity of the South. We have no objections, said he, to competent teachers from the North, who, coming amongst us, identify themselves with us in all our private and public relations, who devote themselves in good faith, and without the bias of sectional feeling, to the work of education. He admired the North in all her physical attributes—“ her purling streams, her hills and mountains baptized in beauty.” He admired the mighty social and moral energies of her people, which, when directed into the legitimate channels of human progress, lead to a nation’s power and glory. But, said the speaker, we have a country not less attractive, a climate more balmy, a soil more fertile, a people no less chivalric and brave ; above all, it has the distinguishing merit of being our *own*, by birth or adoption, and to it, as such, by every consideration of pride and affection, we owe it our first duty.

The system of Normal Schools, said the speaker, was first introduced, in our country, in the States of Massachusetts, New York, and Connecticut. In the commencement, the system was unpopular, and

its utility seriously questioned ; but he was glad to say that the fog of popular prejudice had gradually disappeared, the system had been fully established, and its benefits were proving of incalculable value.

The system was then noticed more in detail. In the first place, it made teaching a profession, and placed it *upon a level* with the other *learned professions*. Here the speaker enlarged upon the dignified character of the employment of teaching, and said that it was entitled to the highest consideration from its exalted duties and grave responsibilities.

In the second place : If the person, of whom it was proposed to make a teacher, is found to be deficient in the art of imparting knowledge, or of enforcing discipline, the system at once sets him aside as naturally unqualified for the profession. And here the speaker remarked, that it required a peculiar order of mind to impart knowledge, and, without it, his efforts would prove fruitless.

In the next place : The system should be under the direction of the Legislature, and the students should be required to give bond that they would teach a certain number of years in the State, in consideration for the tuition afforded them.

In the next place, said the speaker, in order to render the system more perfect, it was necessary to have, in connection with it, what is termed a "*Model School*," where the person learning the art of teaching becomes himself an instructor, under the *special* direction of the Normal Professor. This combines theory and practice, and, from its simplicity, strikes the mind of every one as eminently advantageous.

The person graduating in the Normal School, should, by all means, receive a diploma from proper State authorities, setting forth his qualifications for the high calling of teaching. This process would protect the State from imposition and the profession from discredit.

But, said he, you gravely ask : How can this great work be accomplished ? Would you drain the Treasury for the establishment of this system ? Nay, said he. The system may be started on a small scale. Like the developing child, let it gather strength by degrees. Let buildings, already erected for educational pur-

poses, whose unused walls are now covered with cobwebs, be brought into requisition. It was already proposed, indeed, by a gentleman, at the head of a distinguished school, to educate ten young men annually at interest upon a loan of \$5,000 from the State. The speaker would not dictate to the General Assembly as to what particular system should be put in operation, but urged the importance of the adoption of some system without delay. This done, said he, and education in the State of Louisiana would rear its magnificent front, and its friends "shout for joy,"

The speaker then referred to the "Common-School system" of the State. He said that the Legislature should cherish it by liberal taxation. This would strike the minds of some as unpopular. "Retrenchment and reform being the order of the day," taxation should not be even alluded to. He chose, however, to discharge what he deemed to be his imperative duty, giving popularity to the winds. Here he alluded to article 136 of the Constitution, which he regarded as the brightest jewel in the structure, and without which the whole were comparatively a dead letter. This article, said he, was unpopular with the citizens of the wealthy parishes, who contributed mainly to the support of the system, but who derived, comparatively, little advantage from it. But he recognized no parish lines in a matter of this character. He believed that the rich should sustain the chief burthen of supporting the system, but only, of course, in proportion to their means. In our republican government the rich man is no more regarded in the eye of the law than the poorest peasant, and should not be; for who, when our country calls to arms, first places his musket on his shoulder, and marches in defence of its soil, its rights and honor? The poor. Ever in the hour of danger and strife the poor man has been found our nation's chief reliance and support. He has upheld its power, he has contributed to its glory, and, though poor, though not surrounded by the gilded trappings of the wealthy, he is none the less honest, none the less virtuous, none the less patriotic, and not the less entitled to all the immunities of a freeman!

But, say gentlemen legislators, We cannot tax the people to no

purpose. We cannot consent to a further drain of the Treasury in behalf of a system which has already proved a comparative failure. The speaker denied these premises. A practical, common-sense system *would* work, if rightly conducted.

The appropriation, said he, for the year 1855, was \$297,183 75—giving \$4 75 to each child over six and under sixteen years of age. This sum was insufficient to render the system effective in its workings. To place it upon a sure basis, there should be from \$8 to \$12 allotted to each child. This amount, under a careful and judicious supervision, could not fail to give the system as complete success as its friends could reasonably expect.

But, said he, we do not ask an increase of taxation at present. We simply request such amendments to the present law as to insure as harmonious action as possible with the means we already have at command.

But it is said that a law cannot be framed so as to accommodate itself to the conflicting views and interests of the people in the different sections of the State. In giving utterance to this expression, do you, he asked, speak from a knowledge of facts, or from prejudice? Are you aware that the system has been in operation only ten years, and has not yet had time to prove itself? In other States they have spent scores of years, and millions of dollars, and have only succeeded by perseverance in reducing the system to a complete science. We can do the same.

Let me not, exclaimed the speaker, hear from any source that we can not do in Louisiana what has been so triumphantly achieved in other States. The word "*can't*" is not admissible in connection with the subject of education in our State. If our sister States, Georgia and Alabama, had admitted the word "*can't*," could it be supposed that they would have attained, in almost every branch of human progress, the distinguished position they now hold among the States of the Union? If Louisiana would attain to the same position of intellectual and moral grandeur, let her, like them, erase forever the word from her vocabulary, and upon its frontispiece, instead, emblazon, in characters of living light, that exalted word, "*EXCELSIOR.*"

Suppose that noble-hearted statesman of the West, who but a few years ago bade a last farewell to the American Senate, had admitted the word "can't," would his name this day have stood out in imperishable characters upon Fame's glorious escutcheon? Nay! Suppose the immortal hero of New Orleans, who became by the spontaneous action of the popular will, the Chief Magistrate of this mighty republic, had admitted the word "can't," would his name this day be as a beacon to light up the pathway of the pilgrim to immortal fame? Nay!

We repeat, said the speaker, the system *can* work, and *can* accomplish incalculable good to the present generation, and be the means of blessing tens of thousands yet unborn. How? *By union of action on the part of the people and their representatives.*

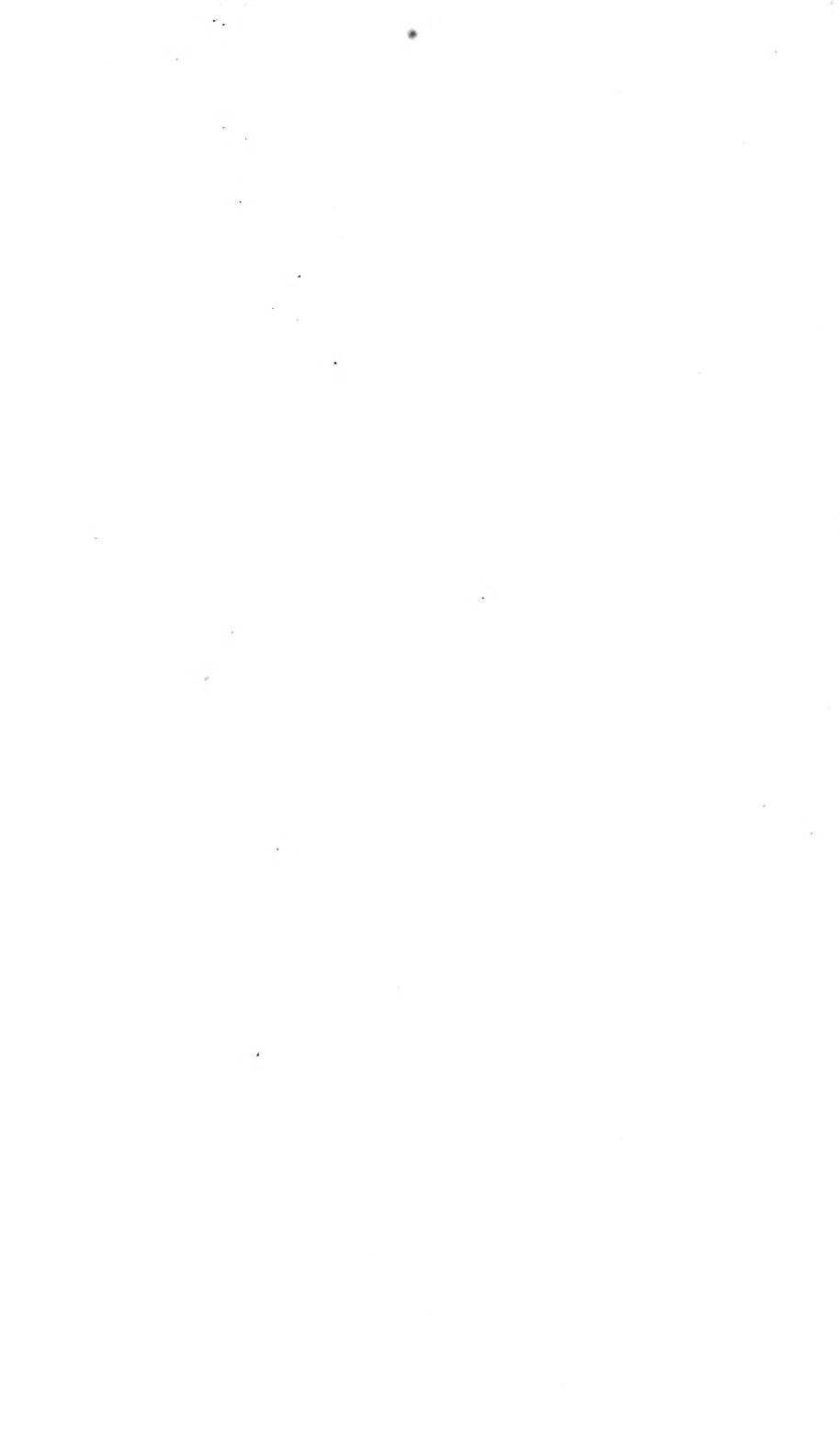
Here the speaker proceeded to illustrate the power of union in a very striking manner. Said he: A few years since there stood upon its stocks at New Albany a magnificent steamer, complete in every particular, and ready to be launched. The waters of the *belle riviere* of the West could scarcely be seen to move along its picturesque banks; consequently there was a convention in the heavens of the rain-drops, which, after agreeing upon a union of their crystal contributions, descended in copious showers upon the thirsty earth. The banks of the beautiful Ohio were filled; the noble steamer was launched; soon she rode out in her majestic course upon the bosom of the mighty Mississippi, the Broadway of the world, to the Crescent City, laden with the rich produce of the West. By a like union of action on the part of the people—each contributing his mite—the Common-School system of our State can be rendered mighty for the accomplishment of good.

But the system, to succeed, must have the motive power. The Legislature must breathe into it the breath of life. This afternoon, said the speaker, he had gazed in spell-bound admiration upon the statue of the immortal Washington, that stands in silent grandeur hard-by your Capitol. The mute marble was so skillfully fashioned at it seemed only to want the breath of life to make it a living,

moving creature. But, alas! that vital principle was wanting: it stood motionless upon its pedestal. So, said he, the Common-School system, though possessing an outline of symmetry and beauty, has been as motionless as that statue, because it has wanted the vital, moving principle to impel it onward.

The speaker, in conclusion, appealed to the Legislature for *action*. Give us, said he, an operative and effective law, that has in it the principle of vitality, and, his word for it, old Plymouth rock would sink into the ocean sooner than their names would be forgotten. In the name of the youths of Louisiana—in the name of the entire people of the State—in the name of the South—in the name of our common country—he called upon the Legislature to give us a law that shall be as a corner-stone in this great work. This done, and the people will, by united effort, carry up the edifice, and, in due time, “bring forth the capstone with shouts of rejoicing.”





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